

Report

Journalists Matter Annual Conference- Prevention Pillar

Defending Truth: Comprehensive approaches to journalistic safety and quality journalism

Chişinău, 23 April 2026

The annual [Journalists Matter](#) Council of Europe campaign conference, held on 23 April 2026 in Chişinău under the Moldovan Presidency of the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe, provided a timely opportunity to reflect on the progress achieved under the Campaign and to further advance discussions on the prevention of attacks against journalists. Bringing together policymakers, journalists, experts, international organisations and civil society, the conference contributed to the broader objectives of the [New Democratic Pact for Europe](#) by reinforcing the link between media freedom, democratic resilience and public trust.

The event followed the 4th meeting of national focal points on the safety of journalists and built on its outcomes, placing particular emphasis on the need to move from reactive responses to more systemic and preventive approaches. Throughout the discussions, there was a shared understanding that media freedom and the safety of journalists are not abstract principles, but operational pillars of democratic resilience. Protecting journalists was consistently framed as essential to safeguarding the integrity of public discourse, especially in an increasingly complex and contested information environment.

A central theme of the conference was the importance of **prevention as a strategic priority**. Participants highlighted that ensuring a safe environment for journalists requires action well before threats materialise. This includes the establishment of enabling conditions for independent and pluralistic media, the development of appropriate legal frameworks, and the strengthening of institutional preparedness. Prevention was also understood as a societal responsibility, encompassing awareness-raising, media literacy and engagement with citizens, in particular young people, to foster critical thinking and resilience.

Discussions also focused on the evolving nature of threats faced by journalists. While physical safety remains a concern, increasing attention was given to challenges arising in the digital sphere, including online harassment, coordinated disinformation campaigns and strategic lawsuits against public participation (SLAPPs). These developments were seen as requiring updated responses, including stronger legal safeguards, enhanced institutional coordination and alignment with European standards. The impact of foreign information manipulation and interference was also highlighted, particularly in the context of electoral processes and democratic stability.

The **Moldovan context** provided a particularly relevant backdrop to these discussions. Participants acknowledged the significant pressures faced by the national media environment, including disinformation and external interference, as well as the important role played by

journalists in countering such challenges and ensuring access to reliable information. In this context, the announcement of Moldova's National Action Plan on the Safety of Journalists (2026–2027) was welcomed as a concrete step towards strengthening national frameworks and enhancing cooperation between institutions, media actors and civil society.

The conference further underlined the importance of **national coordination mechanisms** and multi-stakeholder cooperation. Effective protection of journalists was recognised as depending on the ability of different actors, including public authorities, law enforcement, the judiciary, media organisations and civil society, to work together in a coordinated manner. While the *Journalists Matter Campaign* has contributed to the establishment of such mechanisms in many member States, discussions pointed to the need to further strengthen their effectiveness, sustainability and inclusiveness. In particular, the role of media organisations and the need to ensure their full participation in these structures were emphasised.

A strong human dimension was brought to the discussions through **testimonies from journalists**, including those reporting from conflict zones. These contributions highlighted the realities of working under pressure, the risks involved and the need for practical support mechanisms. They also illustrated the broader societal value of journalism, particularly in times of crisis, where accurate and independent reporting becomes essential for public understanding and accountability.

The conference also gave prominence to the **youth dimension**, recognising young people as key actors in today's information environment. Participants stressed the importance of engaging youth not only through media literacy initiatives, but also as active contributors to dialogue and policy development. This approach was seen as essential for building long-term resilience to disinformation and strengthening trust in journalism.

International cooperation emerged as another key element of the discussions. The complementary roles of the Council of Europe, the European Union, UNESCO and civil society organisations were highlighted, with participants underlining the importance of coordination, exchange of good practices and alignment of standards. At the same time, it was acknowledged that the main challenge remains the effective implementation of these standards at national level.

Overall, the conference confirmed that the *Journalists Matter Campaign* provides a practical and operational framework for addressing the safety of journalists, structured around its four pillars: prevention, protection, prosecution and promotion. While significant progress has been made, the discussions highlighted that further efforts are needed to bridge the gap between commitment and implementation, and to ensure lasting impact.

The exchanges in Chişinău also contributed to ongoing reflections on the future and legacy of the Campaign beyond 2027, including the need to maintain and strengthen existing structures, such as the network of focal points, and to ensure sustainable coordination mechanisms at national level.

In conclusion, the conference reaffirmed that supporting journalists is not only a matter of protection, but a strategic investment in democracy. Ensuring safe conditions for journalism, strengthening quality and ethical standards, and fostering an informed and resilient public were identified as essential components of a comprehensive approach. In a context where information and disinformation increasingly coexist, these efforts are key to preserving trust, safeguarding democratic processes and upholding fundamental rights.